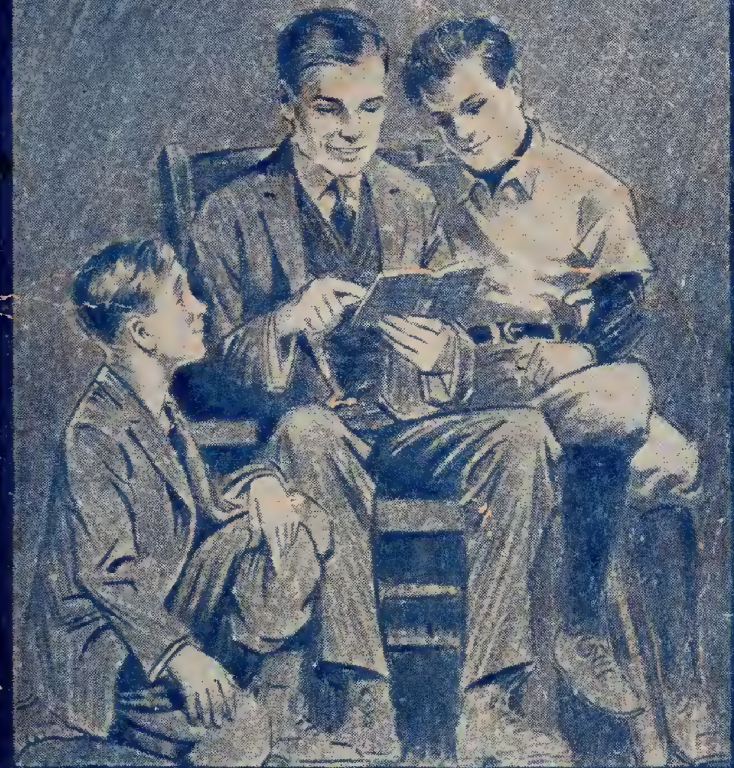


A Father's RESPONSIBILITY



TO HIS
SON

by Charles E. Barker

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CHARLES E. BAKER



PUBLISHED BY
F. H. Cheley, Denver, Colorado
For Special Distribution
During National Father and Son Week

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
Reprinted by Special
Arrangement With
Rotary International Boys' Work Committee
Revised and Edited by the Author

A FATHER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS SON

By Charles E. Barker

I cannot rid myself of the conviction that there is a chance that the people of this country may forget one of the greatest lessons and possibly, shall I say, blessings of the Great War, if we do not enter into a larger, more simple, plain, practical, and scientific way of presenting the truths which have to do with the instructing of our boys and girls on the all-important question of sex hygiene.

The Government has just undertaken on a large scale the spread of information, scientific in character, plain and simple in language, to go to all of the young men and women of this country on this important question. If the American soldiers needed that instruction to clean up their lives so that they could fight clean and did fight clean, how much more then should we give this instruction to the young men and the young women who are in our homes.

I wish to discuss this very important question with you and say to you, that as important as the Government's attitude on the situation is—the instruction of young men and young women of adult age—as important as that is, I hold, that it is as putting the cart before the horse; that if you are going to wait to instruct young men and young women after they reach the age of eighteen or twenty about these most important things which concern their welfare—if you are going to wait until that time, much of the damage will have already been done.

The sane, wise, careful, logical, and sensible way to deal with this problem is by the father with his own boy in the home and the mother with her own daughter in the home; that it is not a question to be left to strangers; that it is not a question that should come to these boys and girls from the public schools.

I say it deliberately, and there isn't anything, after my years of observation, experience, and study on this whole question, about which my own conviction is any more certain than the next statement that I shall make. The teaching of sex hygiene to children in the public schools under high school age is not the safest way to handle this problem. I don't want my boy to have his mind instructed on this most important, and if you please, sacred matter, by a stranger who has no affection or love for him, and I believe that the time has come when we ought to face this situation frankly, as I propose to face it in this brief presentation.

And what is my present purpose? Not to try to persuade you men as to the importance and the necessity of your doing it as fathers with your own boys, for I assume that you are intelligent enough to see that this is the right way to handle this question; that if this information and instruction to children in the home is given by the father and the mother—no matter what instruction they may have later on—they are fortified and buttressed against the temptations that will assail them, particularly during the adolescent age. And so the purpose of this talk is nothing more or less than to answer this question which has been hurled at me

all of these recent years: How are we going to give this instruction, and when should we begin, and how should it be done?

I propose for your benefit to take an imaginary boy of my own, and then to talk frankly to that boy of mine as a father—as I believe any intelligent father ought to talk to his own boy at different ages in his life—so that you in your homes will catch a new inspiration, to not only do this thing yourselves, if you haven't done it before, but that you will also pass on the same message that I am giving you here today to the other fathers in your neighborhood or of your acquaintance.

The biggest asset of this country is not its banks, or its mineral resources, or its public buildings, nor even its educational institutions, but it is the boys and girls of this generation who are coming on.

You ask when should a father begin the instruction on sex hygiene with a boy. When that boy comes into my home, at the age of, say, five or six or seven or somewhere along there, as come he will some day, and asks, "Papa, where did you get me? How did I get into this world?" Why that is a perfectly legitimate question for a child of five or six or seven years of age to ask his father. But how have fathers answered that question in the years gone by.

Go back to those days when you asked your father, and nine out of ten of you will have to acknowledge that it was the same way that my father answered me when I came to him, after I had seen a baby that was born that day and the doctor had said to me, "You were just like

that yourself, once, my boy." I shot out of that house and over to my own home and there encountered my father and said, "Papa, was I ever this long?" Of all the men in the world, that man had his opportunity with me that day; and my father, of sainted memory and who has gone on to glory, knows that I am stating the truth when I say he fell down miserably on the whole proposition by saying, "Charley, that is not the right thing to be talking about. You must never ask questions like that. Now, run out and play." Out I went. I never asked my father that or any other similar question as long as he lived and he lived until I was twenty-five years of age, simply because he shut me out of his confidence on the one thing on which my little mind was revolving and continued to revolve, until I found what was to me a satisfactory answer to my boyish questions.

That didn't stop me from talking on that question. It was not forty-eight hours until I asked that same question of a man back in our garden in our home in Ohio. I asked, "Where did my papa and mamma get me?" He was a foul-mouthed, foul-thinking man, and he brutally went into the physical details that surround married life and bruised and battered the soul of the man that is writing this for you today. Is it any wonder that I am convinced that the thing to do on this proposition is to *begin when the boy first comes upon the proposition and wants to know?*

But what would I say to my boy?

"Hello, Charlie; so you want to know how you came into this world, do you? All right,

Dad will tell you. You get up here on my lap, and I will tell you about it. Do you know, Charlie, that all the flowers in the world and all the fish in the world and all the birds in the world have papas and mammas and that without them they could not have gotten here? You did not know that, did you, lad? Well, I am going to tell you about it, if you will listen carefully."

I would then take a flower, and holding it up say to the boy: "See way down there in the bottom of that flower? That is the mother part of the flower, and up here rising out of the cup is the father part of the flower. You have often seen that yellow stuff that we call 'pollen'—see there? I'll put some of it on your nose—the pollen comes off the father part of the flower and drops down on to the mother part of the flower, and, as a result, there are tiny seeds formed. Then we take these tiny seeds and put them into the earth and carefully cover them over, and the sun beats down upon them and the rain comes, and after two or three weeks, up pops three or four wee baby plants, shooting right out of the soil. Isn't that a wonderful thing to happen?"

"Now, I am going to tell you a little about the fish. In the spring of the year, these mamma and papa fish get off by themselves together, where the water is very shallow and where it is warmer than it is out in the deep parts, and the mamma fish swims along ahead and out from *her* body come hundreds and hundreds of tiny white fish eggs no larger than small shot, and those tiny fish eggs settle down

onto the bottom of the lake or river where there is sand or gravel, and then the papa fish swims along after the mamma fish and over these eggs and out of his body there comes a whitish fluid that settles down over these eggs, fertilizing them. After two or three weeks have gone by, from each of those tiny little white fish eggs, there comes a little baby fish—hundreds and hundreds of them wiggling around in the water together.

“What do the mamma and papa fish do? Do they stay around and protect their babies and children? No! They go on off down to the deep water and have a good time. But it wasn’t that way with your papa and mamma the day you came. Your papa and mamma were with you the day you came into the world and we are going to stay with you until you become big and tall and as strong as your dad.

“I am going to tell you about the birds, too, and then you will know how you came into the world. In the spring of the year, the papa and mamma birds get up into the trees and sing and have a great playtime together. They gather string and hair and other things and make themselves a nest up there in the boughs—you have often seen birds’ nests. Then what do you suppose the mamma bird does? She sits on that nest and out from her body come five or six beautiful bird eggs, sometimes blue, sometimes white, and sometimes all speckled, according to the different kinds of birds; and then she stays there, Charlie, for sometimes three long weeks, and knows in her little heart that if she goes away from her nest and allows

the eggs to get cold, the little baby birds inside those eggshells are liable to die; so she stays there on the nest. And what is the papa bird doing all this time? Well, he has got his work to do. He is out getting bugs and worms and crumbs and all sorts of food in order that he may feed the mamma bird, you know. He says to her, ‘Now, Mamma, I know you have to stay here close to the nest, and I know you would like to come out and play a bit, but you will have to keep those eggs very quiet and warm for the sake of the little birdies that are in them, and so I am going to feed you every day, so you won’t have to get off the nest, and when you are thirsty, I’ll bring you a nice cold drink in my own bill.’

“My boy, all during those two or three long weeks those tiny little birds in the eggs keep getting stronger and stronger every day, until at the end of a certain period they peck their way right through those eggshells and come out, alive and chirping, and that is the way baby birds come into the world. You know how funny they look when they lie there in the nest, with no feathers, just hungry little beggars crying for food.

“Now then, my boy, in your mamma’s body, not very far from her heart, too, is a nest and in that nest—do you know?—you lay for almost a year—nine long months. That is almost as long as it is from one Christmas to another. And oh my! Do you know how much your mamma gave up for you during that time? I am going to tell you about it. She couldn’t run up and down stairs. She had to be very care-

ful, very careful not to jar herself, because if she did, she might hurt you, my boy, inside the nest before you came. She was always very, very careful of you. She couldn't go out nights during the latter part of that time. She gave up a lot of things that she wanted to do and have because before she saw you, before she even knew you, she loved you. She knew you were there, my boy, and said, 'I'll gladly do anything, so that Charlie may be brought into the world healthy and strong.' She gave up meat because the doctor said she musn't eat meat, but must eat fruit and vegetables and let sweet things and candy alone. You know how she likes chocolates, and she even gave them up too, because she loved you, my boy, before she ever saw you. She had looked forward to your coming and wanted you so much for such a long time.

"I want you to know, my boy, that your dad had something to do about it, too. Although you were a long time coming, boy, all those long months I was working my head off down in the office (or shop or factory or farm), working for you, bringing the money home to mamma, because she had to stay there a good deal of the time. I would come home and say, 'Mamma, here's the money I've been earning. Let's get a lot of warm clothes for little Charlie, everything he needs. Let's have a new roof over the house, too, because it is leaking, and we can't afford to have a breath of cold air in here when Charlie comes. Let's get plenty of coal ahead of time, so if there should be a strike on we'll have coal whether there is any trouble

or not. You know we want the house warm when Charlie comes.' And this was all before I ever saw you, boy, for I loved you, too. Before I ever saw you I loved you, and then—do you know?—during all that time you were getting stronger and stronger, just like the baby birds inside the eggs, and then, at the end of almost a year, you got so strong you were able to work yourself out into the world—then you came. Isn't that fine? And mamma and I were so proud of you and so happy, for you were strong and well and handsome and the very first thing that you did, just like the birdies, was to holler for something to eat."

Now, men, if there is anything that I have written that is impure or indelicate in the least, if you think so, it is in *your mind* and not in that child's. It is a beautiful, wonderful story to him.

You tell your boy that story when he is five or six or seven years of age, and the chances are nine out of ten that a little later on when an older boy or girl comes to that child and tries to persuade him to do something harmful to his body that he has never heard about before, if you have told him these things, he is coming right to you, first of all, to ask *you* if that is all right for him to do. Why? Because you have opened the door of knowledge to him, and you have made a confidant of him. Don't you see? But you say, "Oh well, I don't believe that would make any difference with my boy. He would go wrong, just the same." Well, if he does, your skirts would be clear, anyway.

That would be something more than most fathers can say now.

Hundreds of fathers have come to me and told me the same story (I am not exaggerating), and said that because they had given this instruction and handled their boys the way I am suggesting, telling them when they were six or seven years old, that a few years later, when some boy tried to get them to do something that would harm their bodies in the way of self-abuse, they came right back to the father and said, "Dad, So-and-So tried to persuade me to do something that I didn't quite understand, and Johnny said I musn't say anything to you about it, and I told him that I always talked to you about everything." Hundreds of fathers have told me that this is the way it worked out in actual practice.

At any rate, if it shouldn't work out that way, your responsibility is at an end; your responsibility before the sight of God and for that boy's soul will be clear, and that would be something to you and mean something to you as a father, surely.

When that boy gets to be twelve or thirteen years of age, I would have another talk with him, and this time it will not be because he comes to me asking a question, but because I happen to know that at that period of his life, when he is twelve or thirteen or fourteen, a great change is taking place in that boy's development which he does not understand and which he ought to understand if he is going to steer his bark safely for the next seven or eight years through the troublous waters of the adol-

escent period. And so I am going to take the initiative this time with my boy, and I will say: "Charlie, I want to have another chat with you. You know we had a long talk together a few years ago, and we have talked ever since about everything I wanted you to know and you have wanted to know. That's so, isn't it, boy?"

"I want to tell you some other things you ought to know, Charlie. Do you know why it is that hair is commencing to come out on your face? Do you know why it is that your voice has become a little heavier and is thickening up and changing? Well, I suspect you haven't known that, and now your dad wants to tell you, because I want you to know that a very remarkable thing is happening in your body just now. The reproductive organs are beginning to do much work in your body, and I want you to understand what that means to your life physically, mentally, and morally, because upon the way you understand this thing will depend very much the question as to whether or not you are coming to young manhood with a fine, clean, healthy body and mind. I want you to listen carefully to your dad. If you ever listened before, I want you to do so now, my boy."

I would talk just as simply as I knew how to that boy, without a bit of self-conscience or affectation. "In a certain part of your reproductive organs, in the testes which are in the scrotum that hangs down, there are two small glands that manufacture and secrete a fluid which we call the reproductive fluid, or to use the name that you will learn later on,

semen. Now, that fluid is not for the purpose of reproduction now in a boy's life, but it will be later on when you come to your full growth as a man twenty-one or twenty-four. As physicians now understand it and have for the last few years, they know that the fluid which is being continually secreted and manufactured in your body by these glands in the testes is continually being carried up into two small reservoirs provided for that fluid, and then, if you don't waste it from the system, the blood comes along and carries that vital fluid on into the nerve centers of your spine and to your brain cells in your head, so that you can have more energy, more vitality, and more punch, and be a finer man in every way.

"Do you want to play football some day? Do you want to be captain of the team some day? Your dad was captain of his varsity when he went to school, and he wants you to be captain of a team when you get there, boy. But if you want to be all that you can be, you must save your semen in the body, and don't allow anybody to teach you to waste it from your body—it's your future punch and vitality and pep. You will have the necessary energy, and when you play baseball or football or lawn tennis, or study or do anything else, you will be there, boy, with the goods. Some boys don't observe this, Charlie, and I don't blame those boys so much because their fathers didn't tell them about its importance. They didn't know it. But I am telling *you* to have this energy. Don't you see?

Then there's another thing, Charlie. Nearly

all boys when they are fifteen or sixteen or seventeen; along in there, sometimes have an emission of semen at night while they are asleep. Nearly all men do, Charlie. Now, boy, listen, there is nothing harmful about that, unless it occurs too often. If it should, tell Dad about it and we will go to the doctor and talk to him about it. He will see that it is handled properly, if it should happen too many times. Doctors know now that there isn't any harm in a boy having an occasional emission at night, so don't be worried or frightened about it."

This is important, men, because nine boys out of ten, if not told about the emissions, will become worried and fret about it, and some fake physician or advertising specialist will advertise that this is a dangerous thing for the boy and will try to get hold of him to treat him about it. It is an absolutely natural condition and the boy is entitled to that information at that period of his life.

When that boy becomes fifteen or sixteen and is going to high school or is at work and begins to go with girls a bit and have good times with them, as normal boys ought to have, another talk with him becomes necessary. I would say to my boy this time, if he were in my home, "Charlie, I just want you to have the best kind of a time when you go out with the girls, and I *want* you to go with them when it is proper. Be just as jolly and just as full of fun as you can be; but *boy, two or three things I want to tell you*. Don't you ever be guilty of putting your hand, in a familiar way,

upon any girl in the town or the high school, until you have the right to as her fiance. I want you to have fun with them, enjoy them, and perhaps dance with them—have just the greatest kind of a time, but, boy, these girls are *yours to protect*; they are under your protection, and you musn't get into the unfortunate habit, as a good many boys do unthinkingly, I believe, and because they don't know any better, of caressing and kissing the girls at high school parties and when you go out in automobiles with them at night. Neither the boys nor the girls know there is any harm in it, Charlie, and I don't blame them because they have never been told that. But *you know it*, boy, so be careful and don't let any temptations get too big a start, for you might do the girl a hurt and you don't want to do that. Of course you don't want to do that. Be jolly with her and take her out and have a lot of fun. Don't be a prude! I hate a sissy, Charlie; that is about the worst thing on the face of the earth. Don't be a sissy, or I'll thrash the everlasting daylights out of you. But I want you to be a gentleman with these girls; take care of them, boy. They are under your care. You are their protector.

"Now, listen my son! There are going to be some older fellows who will come to you some day. Watch for this. They are coming to you and they are going to tempt you by singing the song that every man has sung in his ears—that sexual intercourse with women and girls is a *necessary* thing. The medical profession stands almost without exception today in the United

States and says that *intercourse is not necessary for health or for efficiency or for vitality*, and that any man who, even should he not marry until he is fifty or sixty years of age, controls himself in this respect, and does not have relations sexually with women or girls, will be healthy and retain his vitality; he will then have more energy and more vitality, and when he marries, he will become the father of healthier children than the man who has taken the position that he had to have this thing because he was a man.

"Charlie, the men who say they have to have this thing say it because they *want it*, and they are using that old falsehood as an excuse for their actions. That is the truth, boy; God grant that you may believe that from your own dad, right now.

"Do you know that 300 of the leading physicians of the United States, such as Dr. Billings of Chicago, the two Mayo brothers, the great Dr. Jacoby, Dr. J. B. Murphy, and many others, have signed a statement against this old theory and in favor of what I have told you?

"There is no reason known to science why any man, under any circumstances, must have, or should have, sexual relations with a woman, outside of the relations which he should have with his own wife when he marries her. The great medical profession took that stand at Vienna, several years ago. Those physicians from all over the world said that the time had come when the profession must make this fact

clearly and forcefully known to the men of the world and say that the old idea that *this thing was a necessity* is now tabooed and exploded.

"What does this mean for the world? It means this one thing, my son. That the day is coming, and I hope before I die, when the double standard of morals for men and women will be a thing of the past. The time is coming when men shall be proud to have lived their lives clean for the sake of their children if for no other reason. The war has largely brought this out, and you can help make it possible by adopting it as your own personal program.

"Do you know that the fellows overseas were highly commended by General Pershing? He said in his report to the Secretary of War—and there it stands at Washington where people can see it—'I am proud, as the American Commander, to say that I have personally investigated the roster of some of the regiments of the American soldiers overseas, thirty-six hundred strong, battle-strong regiments, and there isn't one case of venereal disease among some regiments who went over.' Think of it, boy! That means the boys are beginning to understand that that thing *isn't* necessary. For the sake of the flag and for the sake of the girl back home they lived their lives clean and have come home to live clean lives. You boys have got to keep pace with that standard."

The next step would be when the boy is contemplating marriage. Perhaps we could leave this part out, but I feel that a lot of you men would be glad to know what I would say to my

boy before he marries. I believe there isn't any place in our American life where our institutions are falling down as they are on this question, because nine out of ten men enter the marriage relation without a proper training for parenthood and a proper understanding of certain vital things which they ought to know. I believe it is up to me to tell my own boy those things before he enters that relation, and so I am going to brief the remarks I would make to him, without going into detail. I am going to make one or two suggestions which I think are vital on this phase of the question.

"Charlie, you are going to marry Mary next week, aren't you? She's a fine girl, boy, and I am just as happy over it as you. But, say, Charlie, if you want to be happy in the years that are to come, you listen to your dad now. I have got your confidence—we both know that—so it will be very easy. I have talked to you all the way along. You have always been my comrade, boy, and my pal, and your dad feels free to tell you a number of things that may mean much for your happiness in the years to come.

"Young man, I want you to be self-controlled and moderate in your relations with Mary, sexually, in the years that are to come. Why? Because if you do what a good many other young men do who marry and don't know any better—I don't blame them, because nobody ever told them about it—you will have very frequent and immoderate relations with Mary which will gradually, in the years to

come, deplete your energy and vitality and your nerve power, so that when you come to the age of fifty or sixty, just when you want to be in your prime as a man, you are going to be tremendously handicapped. Not only that, but if you have immoderate, frequent relations with your wife, just because it is legal and nobody is going to hurt you physically and nobody is going to keep you from it legally, the children that are coming from your union are going to be weaker boys and weaker girls when they come into the world because of your lack of self-control. You don't want that to happen with your children, Charlie. Neither does your mother or I, or society either, for that matter.

"Those children, Charlie, have the right to be properly brought into the world. Your boys are not here yet, your girls are not here yet, but they have the right to come into this world, when they do come, with eyes that can see and ears that can hear and with plenty of energy and vitality, and you can give them all that and more, if you and Mary will just be sensible and control this matter and not be immoderate. Talk it out simply with Mary, my boy, and agree from the beginning that you will be moderate.

"I'm not setting up my own opinions as a standard on this question, Charlie, but there is a mark; it is the line of demarcation which the best physicians in the world have set in the last few years. They have said and said repeatedly that the maximum amount of sexual relations which a man should sustain with his wife should

not be more than two or three times a month, and I am saying to you that, although you might feel that that would be sufficient, a good many men, because nobody talked to them the way I have talked to you, look upon the marriage relation only as a legitimate opportunity for them to have relations just as often as their appetite wants them. Nobody told them any differently; but boy, boy, boy, I am telling you what the best doctors in the world say, 'Don't step over the line of two or three times a month; and if you follow this rule, a strange thing about it is that you will have more energy and vitality when old age claims you.

"Now, the other thing is this, my boy, under whatever strain and stress of temptation that may come to you when you are away from home, sometimes to a convention, or on business, or some other occasion, or when Mary is sick in bed, or is carrying a child, your child (you shouldn't have any sex relations with her then, because that would be wrong, physically and scientifically), now my boy, whatever the temptation, don't you have any relations *with any other woman*. Why? Because the man who does that sooner or later usually, if he is going to go into that business, is going to contract one of two diseases, either syphilis or gonorrhea. Sometimes men have done that thing without these results; they have done it ignorantly and blindly and escaped, fortunately for them; but most of them *do not escape*, and do you know the result of those two things? Physicians say they hand themselves down to chil-

dren and to children's children, to the fourth generation. Sometimes men forget that. I don't want *you* to forget.

"In an Eastern city, five years ago, I saw a boy who had a hump on his back—a huge hump. He was stooped over and had a contracted chest; his knees were twisted and his hands were turned out with the elbows close to his side. It was a pitiful sight to see him trying to walk about. I said to my friend, a preacher, 'I may be mistaken, but if I am not, that boy's father had syphilis.' He replied, 'That boy's father is one of the wealthiest men of the city, and he is one of the best men I know of, but three years ago, in my study with the door shut, that father said to me: "I'd give every cent of money I have in the world; I'd give up all today and begin over again a poor man if I could go back and live one night of my life over again." And this was his story: When he was twenty-two, he came back from college to the city; he was a fine young fellow and had lived a clean life. Some of the other fellows who had been at college started down the street with him and said "Let's go down to the red-light district and have a good time." He said, "No; I had better not." They pleaded with him and said, "Oh, all men do this thing. You are no Miss Nancy." He was *afraid to be laughed at* and he said he would go once, but that was all—once. He said, "I went to a mighty high-class place—they said it was—but I contracted syphilis that night and I didn't know it either, and I went on for weeks

not knowing what was the matter with me until one day I went to my doctor and he said, after he had made an examination, 'My God! You've got syphilis!' I said, 'Whatever that is, go to it; I know it must be something pretty bad; get it out of my system.' So he started to treat me under the old methods and he treated me for two years and I never had anything to do with any other woman. I was man enough not to do that. The doctor told me not to marry until he told me that it was out of my system; I was loyal and didn't go near the girl I had been going with. At the end of two or three years the doctor said it was all gone; that I was cured; so I rushed right off, figuratively speaking, in a few days and resumed acquaintance with the young woman to whom I had been engaged, and she resumed the acquaintance, although she didn't know why I had stopped. And I took the finest girl in the city to the marriage altar, and thought there was nothing wrong with me. I believed the doctor knew what he was talking about. But it wasn't out of my system, and my wife contracted this disease from me. A year later, when our first son was born and I laid my hands on this piece of crippled, misshapen humanity, I was bitter against God and said I could not understand why God permitted a thing like that. The doctor then said to me that that was my syphilis. And now I have to look into the eyes of that boy three times a day and know that because one night I couldn't live my life clean, that boy's life is ruined and he is paying *my bill*.' "

"Now, Charlie, I haven't misrepresented this, nor exaggerated it one bit. You can't afford to take that chance. You can't do it. You have got a responsibility to that boy who is not here yet, and I want you to listen to your dad."

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